

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 47

Adopted in Senate August 21, 2003

Secretary of the Senate

Adopted in Assembly September 2, 2003

Chief Clerk of the Assembly

This resolution was received by the Secretary of
State this _____ day of _____, 2003,
at _____ o'clock __M.

Deputy Secretary of State

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RESOLUTION CHAPTER _____

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 47—Relative to eugenics.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SCR 47, Alpert. Eugenics.

This measure would express the profound regret of this Legislature over the state's past role in the eugenics movement, and would urge every citizen of the state to become familiar with the history of the eugenics movement, in the hope that a more educated and tolerant populace will reject any similar abhorrent pseudoscientific movement should one arise in the future.

WHEREAS, The goal of the eugenics movement of the twentieth century was to achieve racial betterment through the elimination of hereditary disorders or genetic defects by means of sterilization, selective breeding, and social engineering; and

WHEREAS, The eugenics movement gained popularity in the United States around the turn of the century, with Indiana enacting the nation's first eugenics-based sterilization law in 1907; and

WHEREAS, In the United States Supreme Court case of *Buck v. Bell* (1927) 274 U.S. 200, Carrie Buck sued to overturn a Virginia state law that allowed state-mandated reproductive sterilization of persons whom the state deemed "imbeciles" or "feeble-minded"; and

WHEREAS, In a landmark 8-to-1 decision in that case, the United States Supreme Court upheld the sterilization law; and

WHEREAS, More than 30 states enacted similar eugenics laws; and

WHEREAS, In 1909, California passed a eugenics-related law permitting the involuntary sterilization of inmates of state hospitals and prisons; and

WHEREAS, Under California's eugenics law, and subsequent amendments to it, inmates of state hospitals and institutions for the mentally retarded, certain prison inmates who were considered sexual or moral "degenerates" or were serving life sentences, and epileptics could be involuntarily sterilized to ensure that they would not produce similarly disabled offspring; and



WHEREAS, In practice, the eugenics laws were used to target virtually any human shortcoming or illness, including alcoholism, drug addiction, pauperism, syphilis, and criminal behavior; and

WHEREAS, Between 1909 and 1964, an estimated 20,000 Californians were sterilized, and some 65,000 men and women were sterilized nationwide; and

WHEREAS, Eugenics laws were frequently used as a respectable, “scientific” veneer to cover activities of people who held blatantly racist views; and

WHEREAS, The “science” of eugenics has since been discredited; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, the Assembly thereof concurring, That the Legislature of the State of California hereby expresses its profound regret over the state’s past role in the eugenics movement and the injustice done to thousands of California men and women; and be it further

Resolved, That this resolution addresses past bigotry and intolerance against the persons with disabilities and others who were viewed as “genetically unfit” by the eugenics movement; and be it further

Resolved, That all individuals must honor human rights and treat others with respect regardless of race, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, physical disability, mental disability, medical condition, marital status, gender, age, sexual orientation, or economic status; and be it further

Resolved, That the Senate and Assembly urge every citizen of the state to become familiar with the history of the eugenics movement, in the hope that a more educated and tolerant populace will reject any similar abhorrent pseudoscientific movement, should one arise in the future; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.



Attest:

Secretary of State

